

**IDAHO SOIL CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
CONSERVATION IMPROVEMENT GRANTS  
POLICY GUIDELINES**

**September 24, 2008**

The Idaho Soil Conservation Commission (*Commission*) is authorized by the Idaho Legislature to finance grants for conservation improvements (I.C. 22-2733). This grant program is administered by the Commission in cooperation with Idaho's 51 local Soil Conservation Districts.

**I. Purpose:** The purpose of the Conservation Improvement Grant program is to finance conservation improvements, projects, and implementation of the water quality program for agriculture. Grant applications may be considered for the purpose of demonstrating new and/or innovative conservation improvements, projects, and implementation of the water quality program for agriculture. These types of projects may include:

- Conservation of soil and water resources
- Improvement of water quality and protection of beneficial uses
- Efficient use of Idaho's water resources
- Improvement in riparian area conditions
- Protection and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat

The Commission will select applications for projects, which, in their best judgment, have the greatest public benefit and conservation impact.

**II. Eligibility:**

- A. All private and public land within Idaho
- B. Any individual, partnership, association, trust, estate, private corporation or other legal entity
- C. Grant funds may not be used for vehicles such as tractors or trucks, land purchase, or livestock
- D. Machinery purchases must be accompanied by the appropriate suite of improvement or management practices, i.e., Irrigation Water Management, Nutrient Management, Prescribed Grazing, Residue Management
- E. Work in progress prior to approval is not eligible
- F. Applicant holds or can acquire title to all lands or has necessary easements or rights-of-way to implement the project plan

**III. Terms:**

- A. Grants are limited to \$10,000, unless otherwise authorized by the Commission.
- B. Grants may be considered in conjunction with RCRDP loan applications.
- C. Grant funds must be matched equally in the form of cash, materials, labor, or use of equipment for practice installation. This match may not consist of funds from

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another cost-share program, or cash, labor, material, and equipment use from Federal, State, County, or local units of government.

- D. Match must be supported by invoices and receipts. Labor, equipment, and machinery match must show hours and hourly rate. Hourly rates must be reasonable and consistent with local wage and custom rental rates.
- E. All conservation improvements, projects, and implementation associated with the water quality program for agriculture must be installed within one year of execution of the grant agreement, unless otherwise authorized by the Commission or Commission Administrator. The Administrator, at the next scheduled Commission meeting, will inform the Commission of any grant period extensions.
- F. Grantee must agree to maintain the installed conservation improvements, projects, and implementations within the water quality program for agriculture for the practice life span as established by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and allow ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

**IV. Funding Priorities**

State and local natural resource priorities for Conservation Improvement Grant funding are listed below. These priorities have equal value:

- a) Surface water priority areas, quality or quantity
- b) Ground water priority areas, quality or quantity
- c) Habitat for ESA-listed species. Includes candidate, petitioned, or species under consideration
- d) Rangeland/Livestock

Priority #1- Grant implementation provides direct impact to and improvement of above priorities

Priority #2 – Grant implementation offers indirect impact to and improvement of above priorities

Priority #3 – Grant implementation does not directly or indirectly impact above priorities, but does offer other resource conservation and protection

**V. Application Procedures:**

Eligible applicants may file an application with the local Soil Conservation District (District) or the Commission. The local District or the Commission shall review and evaluate and, if deemed necessary, investigate all aspects of the proposed conservation improvement, project, or implementation of the water quality program for agriculture.

- A. Complete a Conservation Improvement Grant application, available from the local District, or from the Commission website at [scc.idaho.gov](http://scc.idaho.gov).

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- B. Prepare a conservation plan in conjunction with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, or another appropriate technical entity. The plan will include the following components:
  - 1) A short narrative which describes the project
  - 2) A map which clearly shows the location of the project
  - 3) Preliminary or final design work showing the types and extent of each practice/system to be installed or other pertinent information
  - 4) Standards and specifications for the practices or systems to be installed
  - 5) A statement of clearances, easements, and rights of way needed for the project to proceed
  - 6) Documentation of necessary permits, water rights, and cultural resource evaluations
  - 7) A schedule indicating the month and the year that the practice or system will be installed
  - 8) A statement wherein the applicant or another specified party agrees to properly maintain the installed practice or system for the established lifespan
  - 9) Provide a detailed cost estimate for the project on the application form or in a similar format
- C. Submit the completed application and conservation plan to the local District or the Commission. Applications submitted to Soil Conservation Districts will be reviewed, evaluated, and ranked by the District as high, medium, or low in meeting the conservation priorities established by the District's five-year resource conservation plan, and forwarded to the Commission. Applications submitted to the Commission will be reviewed and evaluated by Commission staff, with input from the appropriate District.
- D. Grant applications must be received in the Commission's Boise office three weeks prior to a Commission meeting for review at that meeting. Commission meetings are held bi-monthly (every two months). If the application meets the basic policy criteria, the Commission will review the application at the next formal meeting.
- E. Projects will be approved by the Commission which, in their best judgment, would have the greatest public benefit and positive impact on natural resources.
- F. If approved by the Commission, the applicant must sign a grant agreement, specifying the conditions of the grant.